

Chair Sosa, Vice Chairs Chaichi and Osborne, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Shelley Beaulieu, and I am writing in strong support of HB 3179, the FAIR Energy Act. I have worked in energy efficiency for 20 years, primarily supporting households navigating low incomes. In 2018, I helped develop Oregon's Ten-Year Plan for Reducing Energy Burden in Affordable Housing, which laid out a roadmap to ensure that all Oregonians, especially those with the highest energy burdens, have access to affordable, efficient, and reliable energy.

Since then, despite the efforts outlined in that plan, energy burden in Oregon has skyrocketed, driven by unprecedented rate increases. Families that were already struggling to keep up are now facing even greater financial strain, forcing impossible choices between keeping the lights on, heating their homes, and paying for other essentials.

Unfortunately, the most recent data confirming this crisis is no longer publicly available. In just the last week, the U.S. Department of Energy removed its Low-Income Energy Affordability Data (LEAD) Tool, which had been one of the most critical resources for understanding the extent of energy burden across the country. The removal of this tool makes it even more urgent for Oregon to take action—because while the federal government is prioritizing "energy dominance," our state must prioritize energy affordability and fairness for its residents.

HB 3179 takes critical steps to protect ratepayers from unchecked increases and ensure greater transparency and accountability from for-profit utilities and regulators. It prohibits winter rate hikes, limits the frequency of major rate increases, and requires clearer public disclosures so customers know what they're paying for and what changes to expect. Additionally, it strengthens the Oregon Public Utility Commission's authority to set fair rates, consider household economic conditions, and take control over when new rates take effect—ensuring that energy affordability is prioritized over utility profits.

HB 3179 is a necessary and overdue step to protect Oregon households from escalating energy costs that disproportionately impact those with the least ability to pay. I urge the committee to pass this bill and reaffirm Oregon's commitment to ensuring that all residents, regardless of income, have access to affordable energy.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Shelley Beaulieu